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Effects of Climate Change-Induced Reforestation on Mammal Communities and Potential Implications for Zoonotic Pathogen Reservoirs

Inhalt

Forest ecosystems are currently undergoing profound changes. Large-scale reforestation and climate adaptations are expected to drive substantial ecological change. The aim of the ANTIZOONS project is to investigate the effects of climate change-induced forest conversion on wildlife reservoirs and zoonotic pathogens in an interdisciplinary approach. It promotes a One Health perspective on the health of forest ecosystems, wildlife and humans.

In a subproject, wildlife is monitored by two camera traps installed at each of 21 reforestation sites of different (climate-adapted) tree composition in Hesse to investigate whether sites differing in tree species composition (conifer-/or broadleaf-dominated, and evenly mixed stands) affect mammal communities. In addition, the study examines, if observed changes are associated with the abundance of zoonotic pathogen reservoirs.

Results from camera trapping in autumn 2025 and spring 2026 as well as snap trapping rodents are presented. A total of 764 photographs of mammals were obtained during the first trapping period. They suggest that wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) and red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) are common. Wild boar seemed more active in conifer-dominated forests, whereas red foxes were less often detected in broadleaf-dominated stands and deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) were recorded at similar frequencies across tree compositions. Further results will be reported and their relevance for zoonotic pathogens discussed.

Keywords

reforestation, camera trapping, biodiversity, climate change, zoonoses, mammal communities

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Junior Scientist Status

Yes, I am a Junior Scientist.

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